

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO



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NEWS RELEASE

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Council Passes Citywide Streetlight Conversion to White Lights

Atkins Leads Charge to Make Urban Areas Safer More Liveable

San Diego - In a bold move to create safer streets for pedestrians and drivers, a 6-member majority of the City Council on February 26th voted to convert the City's yellow, low pressure sodium (LPS) street lights to white, high pressure sodium (HPS) ones. The action, first championed late last year by Third District Councilmember Toni Atkins at the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee which she chairs, also received the early support of Mayor Dick Murphy. Joining Atkins and Murphy in approving the measure were Councilmembers Byron Wear, George Stevens, Jim Madaffer and Ralph Inzunza. In opposition were Councilmembers Scott Peters, Brian Maienschein, and Donna Frye.

"With white lights it is easier to distinguish color, it is more inviting for people to come out at night, and it makes people feel more secure in their neighborhoods," Atkins said. "If I can do anything that makes people feel safer in their neighborhoods, then I will do it."

The conversion to white lights will be prioritized by crime statistics, traffic counts, proximity to schools and parks, population density and community requests.

Opponents of the white light conversion have long contended that such an action would dramatically decrease visibility of the nighttime sky, thus hindering astronomical ventures of nearby Mount Palomar Observatory. In direct response to these concerns, the Council measure excludes any part of the City that is within 30 miles of Mount Palomar, including Rancho Bernardo, Sabre Springs, and part of Rancho Peñasquitos.

To further address these concerns, the measure calls for the installation of full cutoff fixtures when the lights in cobra-style fixtures are replaced. This fully shields the light at the top, casting all of their light downward, thereby minimizing light pollution and getting more light on the street. Additionally, all new acorn-style fixtures will have semi-cutoff features.

The cost of the conversion over three years could total \$3 million. However, Councilmember Atkins stressed that the action taken by Council is a policy change, not a budget action.

"The reason we have to act now is so that the City Manager will be directed to put a line item for light

conversion in the new fiscal year budget in May. The Council can debate the dollar allocation at that time, but only if it is in the budget to be discussed," said Atkins. "Additionally, the street light installations currently in the pipeline--relighting Broadway, replacing lights during undergrounding, etc.--will be done with white lights and cutoff fixtures, thereby reducing the number that will have to be converted in the future."

As part of the plan, the City Manager has been directed to continue to pursue energy saving initiatives currently underway, including, solar-powered lights like the ones currently being installed in some locations by the North Park Landscape, Lighting and Maintenance District, and light emitting diode (LED) powered lights. The City will also continue working on refining and implementing policies in the City's Street Design Manual, including use of cutoff fixtures.

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